

**Arlington Redevelopment Board**  
**June 15, 2015 Minutes**  
**Town Hall, Lyon's Hearing Room, Town Hall – 7:00pm**

Approved: July 20, 2015

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

**PRESENT: Chair, Andrew Bunnell, Mike Cayer, Andy West**

**ABSENT: Bruce Fitzsimmons**

**STAFF: Carol Kowalski**

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Documents Used:

Arlington Design Standards Handout from Gamble and Associates

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7:00pm, and stated that David Gamble of Gamble and Associates would be presenting a set of design standards for discussion. Mr. Bunnell stated the meeting was being recorded by ACMi and resident Christopher Loreti would also be recording portions of the meeting.

Ms. Kowalski summarized the purpose of the meeting and mentioned that because there was not a quorum of Redevelopment Board members the Board would not vote or take action tonight. Ms. Kowalski introduced David Gamble and Brian Gregory from Gamble and Associates.

Mr. Gamble introduced himself to the audience, recapped the work that Gamble and Associates has been involved with up to this point, and gave an overview of design guidelines. He recapped what design standards can do, such as improve the character of new development and articulate standards of quality. He explained that design standards have the ability to go too far, and codify or regulate style. Design guidelines cannot regulate building use, replace zoning codes, nor can they redesign streets or Master Plan areas.

Mr. Gamble provided various visual examples from across the country of development that started small with interesting projects and were successful. These areas encourage mixed use rather than dictating uses. He stated that mixed use will make the corridors active.

Mr. Gamble explained form-based code; it is different than classic Euclidean zoning and encourages emphasis on the public realm. It emphasizes form over use and encourages public engagement. He stated that Gamble and Associates researched about 20 locations that are using design graphics and drawings; this research will be on the Town's website.

Mr. Gamble summarized the three main categories that the design standards revolve around are the commercial corridors, the recreational trails, and the Mill Brook. There are seven themes that help to clarify how a developer would proceed with a project in these areas. These themes are: building setbacks, building height, public realm interface, parking and access, connections and linkages, facades and materials, and signage and wayfinding.

Mr. Gamble showed a hypothetical example of design standards being applied to a real location in Arlington. He pointed out that the key is making a connection from Mass Ave to Spy Pond. Mr. Gamble asked the audience to use handheld response units to vote on a range of questions; however such units did not work.

Mr. Gamble opened the floor for questions from the audience. Mike Smith asked about alternative energy services, such as green roof replacement or solar panels. Mr. Gamble said they can be incentivized. Sustainability could be its own category but Gamble and Associates believes it is embedded in each category already.

An audience member asked about single story stores, and why there are still so many along Mass Ave. Mr. Gamble said there might be multiple property owners in those areas. Also, the width of a

parcel might not be deep enough to accommodate parking changes and footprint changes. A developer might not be incentivized to build a new building there due to current parking requirements. Mr. Gamble said the standards could help with this dilemma.

An audience member asked who owns the Mill Brook currently. Ms. Kowalski said the land along the Mill Brook is owned by many property owners. The audience member also asked where in the process these design standards are right now. Ms. Kowalski said they are still being prepared; they are not etched in stone but the Town has decided that some design guidelines are expected to be implemented, as stated in the Arlington Master Plan.

John Worden asked if the Design Guidelines will be submitted to Town Meeting for approval or endorsement. Ms. Kowalski said she hopes that parts would be worked into a Zoning Bylaw Amendment, which would go before Town Meeting. Mr. Worden mentioned that even though the Capitol Theater is a well-liked look, it would not be beneficial to have Mass Ave lined with exact replicas. Ms. Kowalski agreed. Mr. Gregory explained how the character of a neighborhood can transition as you go along Mass Ave, and this would be determined from design guidelines.

An audience member asked about the timeline for these design standards to be implemented. Ms. Kowalski described the expected milestones in response.

Chris Loreti asked if the Town can support commercial development along Mass Ave. He said that it doesn't seem like the Town has a huge demand for commercial uses on the first floor of buildings on Mass Ave. Mr. Loreti said he is concerned about having a lot of vacant store fronts. Ms. Kowalski said she does not think they will ask for the length of Mass Ave to have too many storefronts. It would be a blend of office, commercial, and existing use. Mr. Gregory expanded on the flexibility that design guidelines would allow on a stretch like Mass Ave.

Ms. Kowalski commented that Mr. West was now present and that a quorum existed and business may be conducted.

Mr. Gamble asked the audience what their main concerns are over new development.

Susan Stamps mentioned her concern is how to make Mass Ave more walkable and friendly. In Lexington there are benches, trees, and cafes. East Arlington is pretty good but Arlington Center to Arlington Heights is an unpleasant throughway. There could be pocket parks and benches added in order to help with this issue. Mr. Gamble agreed saying that the public realm interface is one of the most important aspects to get right.

Another member of the audience noted that driveways being too close to the intersections can become an issue. Mr. Gamble agreed and reiterated the importance of curb cuts.

Mr. Worden stated that he thought the residential neighborhoods were of greater concern. People aren't worried about the commercial areas; they are worried about their own block and tearing down small houses to be replaced by oversized houses. Mr. Gamble said he understood, but that issue is outside of the design standards exercise that was just completed.

Roland Chaput stated that in the commercial and industrial areas, such as Mill Brook and Mass Ave, doing nothing should not be an option. Mr. Gamble agreed and said you need a good "first product" to show developers that things can be changed.

Tamara Rey said she was concerned about parking. When you get density, which Ms. Rey says she supports, it requires parking you can't get onsite. We should think of sites that can provide structured parking to support redevelopment. It is a conundrum. Lexington has parking behind buildings, which works because it was planned; the sites were aggregated and planned. Mr. Gamble added that the way to solve parking is not to add more of it.

An audience member asked about how design standards relate to affordability and can the Town use design standards to achieve affordability. Mr. Gamble said the Town can create incentives for smaller units, which will attract a different demographic. Mr. Cayer mentioned the inclusionary zoning bylaw as a reference to look at as well.

Patricia Worden said inclusionary zoning is very desirable but it has to be enforced. Mr. Gamble said that design standards are only as strong as the mechanisms that enforce them. Part of the effectiveness will be the way in which they are enforced by the Town. Mr. Loreti asked who would enforce this. Mr. Gamble stated that enforcement happens in several ways such as new staff, outside review bodies, or a consortium of people. Mr. Loreti asked if it was part of the special permit process. Mr. Gamble stated that it can be.

Mr. Loreti asked about Gamble and Associates vision for the Walgreens site, and where the parking would be for that space.

Another audience member asked how the building development would integrate with transit, and to not only consider the places people will go, but also how they are getting there.

Mr. Gamble pulled up the Walgreens test case and explained where parking would go below grade, and discussed the details of the test case further.

Mr. Loreti asked how we can be sure we aren't going too far, or will adopt a planning trend that will later be considered outdated. Mr. Gamble said what is attractive to people of all ages is mixed use, inclusion of open space, and walking distance to commercial centers. These aspects are timeless.

Neil Mongold said thinking about corridors is great, but it might be better to think of them as how they pull from the surrounding neighborhood. The way you get to the corridors is very important. This space has to be varied and interesting enough that it will draw people from their neighborhoods to a corridor, and back from a corridor. Mr. Mongold said one of his fears is similar to that shown in the film "Back to the Future", with an overdevelopment happening in the future.

Wendy Richter asked how the Town can incentivize or engage properties that are dormant. Ms. Kowalski said that changing the zoning could help with this. A developer can be brought on board for a project if it is clear that the zoning is going to change in order for the project to work.

Ms. Kowalski said she would work on getting these questions on to the website, and asked that all participants to fill out the handout provided by Gamble and Associates in order to communicate your concerns or thoughts.

Ms. Rey added that this process seems very exciting, and she wanted to share her positive impression of the presentation and process.

Mr. Bunnell turned to the final agenda item of the discussion of a walk through at the Mugar site. The Board decided to attend a site visit of the Mugar property on June 23, 2015.

Mr. Cayer moved to adjourn. Mr. West seconded. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.